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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Central Ohio Passes Clean Air Test

U.S. EPA Redesignates Columbus Area to Attainment for Ozone Standard

(Columbus – September 22, 2009) The United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) announced last week that six central Ohio counties are now meeting the 1997 national health-based outdoor air quality standard for ozone pollution. Sources of ozone pollution include cars, diesel vehicles, lawn equipment and power plants.

The good news affects Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Knox, Licking and Madison counties. U.S. EPA said complete, quality-assured, outdoor air monitoring data from the counties for 2006, 2007 and 2008 meet the standard set in 1997.

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), the agency that issues daily air quality forecasts for central Ohio, applauds the work that the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) and others have done to clean up the region's air; however, significant air quality challenges are on the horizon.

Under the Clean Air Act, U.S. EPA is required to periodically review its ozone standard to ensure it adequately protects public health. After reviewing more than 1,700 peer-reviewed scientific studies about the effects of ozone on public health and welfare, U.S. EPA strengthened the standard in 2008 by reducing acceptable ozone pollution concentrations from 80 parts per billion (ppb) to 75 ppb.

"It is very encouraging that central Ohio's air is getting cleaner," said MORPC Executive Director Chester R. Jourdan, Jr. "We can use this momentum to continue making notable air quality improvements in order to comply with the new, 2008 standard."

Additional ozone standard revisions are slated for this December. Also last week EPA announced that it plans to reconsider the standard again to further protect public health. The agency will issue a final decision by August 2010.

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Working to Build a Better Region

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MORPC will continue its efforts to improve central Ohio's air quality by issuing daily air quality forecasts for the region and alerting the public when air pollution reaches levels that are considered to be unhealthy for certain sensitive groups through news outlets and ODOT overhead highway signs; working with diesel fleets to install emission-reduction technology; providing carpool and vanpool assistance to commuters; coordinating Central Ohio Greenway trail connection to encourage walking and bicycling; providing home weatherization assistance and energy efficient upgrades to income-eligible applicants; completing carbon footprint assessments for local governments; and linking air quality with issues of transportation, energy, local food, water quality, housing and the economy in a regional planning project.

A map outlining the Ohio attainment areas can be found at <http://www.epa.ohio.gov/dapc/SIP/1997.aspx>.

MORPC is a voluntary association of 47 local governments in central Ohio serving the region through planning, direct service, public policy information and innovative programming and intergovernmental coordinating services in the areas of transportation, land use, energy conservation, the environment and housing. MORPC is currently celebrating its 40th Anniversary and its efforts to build a better central Ohio region.